

Amphill (Reconstructed House)
(Richmond Vicinity)
Henrico County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-159

HABS
VA

21- _____

1-

ORIGINAL SITE
CHESTERFIELD COUNTY

Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey
Eugene Bradbury, Architect in Charge
Grace Securities Building, Richmond, Virginia

HABS
VA21-
1-

AMPTHILL (Residence)
Richmond Vicinity, Henrico County, Virginia

Owner: Hunsdon Cary (of reconstructed house)

Date of Erection: 1732 - Reconstructed 1929-30

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Henry Cary (owner)

Present Condition: Excellent

Number of Stories: Central portion, two and basement. Wings and connections, one.

Materials of Construction: Brick (flemish bond)

Other Existing Records: None known

Additional Data: The traditional date of the house, 1732, is not contradicted by public records. Fairfax Harrison, the discriminating historian of the Carys, writes us: "Henry Cary moved from Williamsburg to Henrico in 1727 and established himself on the south side of the James at the place to which he gave the name 'Warwick', where later he built his mill. He then and until 1732 described himself in deeds, etc., as of 'Warwick' in Henrico, as shown by the county records. After 1732 he described himself as of the parish of Dale. He never used the name Ampthill as did his son, not even in his will, 1748. In 1730 he sold his inherited lands in Warwick County and was then in funds to build a new house." (Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic - Kimball)

Just across the river from Wilton stands an old mansion whose chief characteristics are dignity and strength. This is Ampthill - a big square house with massive brick walls, a square white porch and a steep Dutch roof flanked on either hand by a square brick outbuilding as massive as itself. Within, the high-pitched rooms are also big and square, and they and the wide hall are panelled from floor to ceiling with oak. The windows are protected by panelled inside shutters of the same wood, while huge brass locks and

hinges make fast the thick oak doors.

It was built in 1732 by Henry Cary (1675?-1749), who superintended the building of the Governor's Palace and the State House in Williamsburg, and also the rebuilding of William and Mary College when it was destroyed by fire. Upon his death, in 1750, Ampthill passed to his son Archibald Cary (1721-1787), the celebrated Revolutionary patriot, and chairman of the committee in the Virginia Convention of 1776, which brought in the resolution directing the Virginia members of Congress to move for entire independence of Great Britain. From his force of character and determination he was known as "Old Iron".

Ampthill has since had various owners--the families of Temple and Watkins having enjoyed the longest tenure.

Within the original bounds of the Ampthill plantation was beautiful Falling Creek, with its arched stone bridge and its quaint old mill, where the first iron-works in America were established, under John Berkeley, in 1619. The works were abandoned in 1622, after the Indian massacre in which Berkeley and all of his men were murdered, and during the Revolution the furnaces were destroyed by Tarleton and his troopers. (Historic Virginia Homes and Churches - Lancaster)

"Ampthill" is one of the three structures in and around Richmond that are definitely known as associated with General Washington. "Ampthill" was removed from its former original location about 6 miles south of Richmond on the Petersburg Pike. It was removed and rebuilt in its original shape on the Cary Street Road, and is now the home of Mr. and Mrs. Hunsdon Cary, Mr. Cary being a descendant of the original owners of the home. ("Richmond News Leader", February 22, 1934)

Author: Eugene Brodkey.

Approved: Thos. T. Waterman 12/27/40

Ref: Domestic Colonial Architecture of
Richmond Virginia. Waterman &
Barnes